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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
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GREENHOUSE FLOWERS AND FLORISTS CROPS

The number and kinds of plants grown in the greenhouse are almost infinite. It is not the purpose here to include information on the individual requirements of each crop. There is difficulty in laying down hard and fast rules in that plants require different conditions at various stages of growth. Many plants will live under conditions that are far from ideal but will not be at their best.

For the purpose of this brief, florist crops can be divided into two classifications: (1) Bench crops, and (2) Pot and Specimen plants. These can be subdivided into cool (45° to 55° F.), intermediate (55° to 65° F.), and warm (65° to 75° F.) house crops.

Bench Crops

Bench crops are mostly propagated by seeds or cuttings in the early spring or during the summer, depending upon the speed with which the crop grows and the time at which flowering is desired. The plants are moved to the field as soon as weather conditions permit. In the fall, before there is any danger of frost, or when the benches are not in use, the plants are brought back into the greenhouse.

Occasionally it becomes necessary to purchase plants from others in order to fill the bench space in the fall. When this is necessary it is desirable to know something of the history of the plants, since success or failure so often depends upon getting good plants. It goes without saying that care in keeping diseases and insects in check is just as important as proper watering and weeding.

Crops which are usually grown in a cool house are stocks, carnations, sweet peas, snapdragons, wallflowers, ranunculus, violets, lupines, larkspur, delphiniums, and calendulas. Those usually grown under intermediate temperatures buddleias, gerberas, clarkias, chrysanthemums, Easter lilies, and gladiolus. Crops grown under warm house conditions are roses, gardenias, and lily-of-the-valley.

Pot Crops

Under pot plant classification are numerous specialty plants. If only cut flowers are desired, then it may be more advantageous to grow the crop in the bench, except that it is easier to throw out a pot or two, which can be replaced with others, than to remove the crop from the bench. It is also possible to move the pots from house to house, or to and from cold storage.

Because the pot crops cover such a large group of plants, each of which has its own definite requirements, it is impossible to give detailed directions for their care.

For most potted crops, seed is planted in the spring or summer and the plants are moved as necessary, so that growth will not become stunted. The following crops are usually grown in the cool house: Most bulbs (frequently following a cool storage rooting period), azaleas, calceolarias, cyclamen, cinerarias, and hydrangeas. Poinsettias, begonias, callas, African violets, gloxinias, amaryllis, fuchsias, and primroses are usually grown in the intermediate house. Gardenias, orchids, crotons, ferns, palms, and dracenas are usually grown under warm house temperatures.

Following is a list of books that may be useful for those who want detailed information on the culture of greenhouse plants:

The Florist Business. E. A. White, The Macmillan Co., New York, N. Y.

Commercial Floriculture. Fritz Bahr, A. T. De La Mare Co., Inc.
New York, N. Y.

Commercial Flower Forcing. Laurie and Kiplinger, P. Blakiston's Sons
& Co., Inc., Philadelphia, Pa.

Florist Crop Production and Marketing. 1949. Kenneth Post.
Orange Judd Publishing Co., Inc., 15 E. 26th Street, New York, N.Y.

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